

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

What is claimed is:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of initiating the bypassing of a pair of transcoding operations performed in series by a first transcoder arranged together with a first communication terminal on a local side of a communication network and by a second transcoder arranged together with a second communication terminal on a distant side of the communication network, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving by the first transcoder arranged with the first communication terminal on a local side of a communication network from the second transcoder arranged with the second communication terminal on the distant side, in a first initial request to bypass transcoding operations, information about an encoding format currently in use by the second communication terminal on the distant side and about encoding capabilities of the second communication terminal distant side, including the version of the bypassing protocol supported by the respective transcoder; and,

transmitting by the first transcoder arranged with the first communication terminal to the second transcoder arranged with the second communication terminal on the distant side, in a second initial request to bypass transcoding operations, information about an encoding format currently in use by the first communication terminal on the local side and about encoding capabilities of the first communication terminal on the local side, the information about the encoding capabilities including [[a]] the version of a bypassing protocol supported by the respective transcoder, to enable on one or on both sides a change of the encoding format currently in use prior to initiating the bypassing of the transcoding operations.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of deciding about the change of the encoding format even if compatible encoding formats are currently used on both sides.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the information on the encoding capabilities of the second communication terminal on the distant side is used to determine an alternative encoding format that is supported on both the first communication terminal on the local and the second communication terminal on the distant side.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the change of the encoding format is effected on the basis of the alternative encoding format.

5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the information about the encoding capabilities includes a list of data embodied on a computer readable medium about encoding formats supported by the respective communication terminal.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the change of the encoding format is effected with the purpose of establishing an optimal encoding configuration on the basis of compatible encoding formats between the communication terminals on both sides.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of changing the encoding format currently in use and notifying the second transcoder arranged with the second communication terminal on the distant side thereof prior to entering an operational state bypassing the transcoding operations.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 4, wherein a bypassing protocol is aborted if incompatible protocol versions are used by the first and second communication terminal on the two sides and/or, in the case of compatible protocol

versions, the encoding format is changed in a contact state of the bypassing protocol that is followed by an operational state in which the transcoding operations are bypassed.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the information about the encoding format used by a terminal includes a codec type that is used to encode speech signals into an encoded data representation.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the information on the encoding capabilities of the second terminal on the distant side is used to look up a subset of encoding formats supported by the second terminal on the distant side, wherein that subset is compared with the encoding formats supported by the first terminal on the local side and wherein the best encoding format in common is chosen to initiate bypassing of the transcoding operations.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the information about the encoding format currently in use and about the encoding capabilities are included in a message embodied in a computer readable medium requesting the initiation of a bypassing protocol or a message acknowledging such a request.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, wherein the information about the encoding capabilities is appended in the form of one or more individual information blocks to the message.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, wherein a first appended block includes the version of a bypassing protocol and an indicator that indicates if the first appended block is followed by a second appended block that includes a list of supported encoding formats.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the method is

performed in context with setting up of a tandem free operation (TFO) between the two communication terminals.

15. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of the communication terminals uses at least one encoding format in the form of a codec type to encode speech signals into an encoded data representation and wherein messages are sent between the two transcoders to determine if the communication terminals have at least one codec type in common and if this is the case to establish a data connection between communication terminals without having the need to insert transcoding functions into a signal path between the communication terminals.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein between the transcoders first messages are exchanged that contain the information about the encoding format currently used by the respective communication terminal and that contain the further information about the encoding capabilities of the respective communication terminal or transcoder.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14, wherein a second message embodied on a computer readable medium is exchanged between the transcoders as a response to the first message if both reported codec types match or regardless of such a match.

18. (Currently Amended) A computer program product comprising program code portions for performing the steps of claim 1 when the computer program product is run on embodied on a computer readable medium and loaded into and executed by one or more processors within computing units of the communication network.

19. (Canceled)

20. (Currently Amended) A device for processing signals in context with the initiation of the bypassing of a pair of transcoding operations performed in series by a first transcoder arranged together with a first communication terminal on a local side of a communication network and by a second transcoder arranged together with a second communication terminal on a distant side of the communication network, said device comprising:

a component for receiving information, in a first initial request to bypass transcoding operations, about an encoding format currently in use by the second communication terminal on the distant side and about encoding capabilities of the second communication terminal on the distant side, including the version of the bypassing protocol supported by the respective transcoder; and,

a component for transmitting information, in a second initial request to bypass transcoding operations, about an encoding format currently in use by the first terminal on the local side and about encoding capabilities of the first terminal on the local side, the information about the encoding capabilities of the first terminal including [[a]] the version of a bypassing protocol supported by [[the]] its respective transcoder, to enable on one or on both sides a change of the encoding format currently in use prior to initiating the bypassing of the transcoding operations.

21. (Previously Presented) A transcoder including the device of claim 20.

22. (Currently Amended) The transcoder of claim 21, further comprising a component comprised therein for evaluating local and distant encoding information and for controlling the change of the encoding format.

23. (Previously Presented) A communications system including the transcoder of claim 21 and a controller for evaluating local and distant encoding information and for controlling the change of the encoding format.

24. (Previously Presented) The communications system of claim 23,

wherein the controller is included in a BTS or a BSC.

25. (Currently Amended) An initial request message embodied on a computer readable medium of initiating the bypassing of a pair of transcoding operations performed in series by a first transcoder arranged together with a first communication terminal on a local side of a communication network and by a second transcoder arranged together with a second communication terminal on a distant side of the communication network, the initial request message comprising information blocks comprising information about an encoding format currently in use on the distant side and about encoding capabilities of the distant side, the information about the encoding capabilities including a version of a bypassing protocol supported by the transcoder on the distant side.

26. (Currently Amended) The message embodied on a computer readable medium according to claim 25, wherein the information about the encoding capabilities includes a list of encoding formats supported by the communication terminal on the distant side.

27. (Currently Amended) The message embodied on a computer readable medium according to claim 25, wherein the information about the encoding capabilities is appended in the form of one or more individual information blocks to the message.

28. (Currently Amended) The message embodied on a computer readable medium according to claim 27, wherein a first appended block includes the version of the bypassing protocol and an indicator that indicates if the first appended block is followed by a second appended block that includes a list of supported encoding formats.